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PAUL'S SPEECH

TO THE

BISHOP OF CRETE,

OR, THE

ANCIENT CHRISTIANS PRINCIPLE, OR  
RULE OF GOOD LIVING,

REVIVED AND BROUGHT TO LIGHT,

THROUGH THE CONTINUED APPEARANCE  
AND OPERATION OF

INWARD AND SPIRITUAL GRACE :

SET FORTH

BY ANSWERS TO NINE WEIGHTY  
QUESTIONS.

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TO THE  
READER.

**M**OST men have learned to speak well of grace, but few of them can tell what it is, or where it may be found: many will acknowledge it to be the gift of God; yet think to have it from the lips of men: many are persuaded, that all wickedness is for want of grace; yet, through their ignorance, slight the appearances thereof in themselves: many are convinced, that there is a sufficiency therein, were it before men's faces, to preserve them from great sins; but cannot believe there is a sufficiency therein to save them from any sin.

Which plainly shews, that their speaking well of grace is from hearsay, and not from experience.

This little Treatise sheweth, what grace is, where it may be found, and how it comes to be before men's faces; that it is the only favour from sin, and so the true salvation. For whosoever is saved from sin here, shall certainly be saved from death and condemnation hereafter: and that many may come to be witnesses of this salvation, is the desire of

H. T.



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PAUL'S SPEECH  
TO THE  
BISHOP OF CRETE.

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**P**AUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ, writing to Titus, the first bishop of Crete, had this saying, *The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*

From which weighty sayings these following questions arise.

QUEST. I. What is the grace of God?

ANSW. The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, is no less than a divine inspiration, the gift of God to the sons and daughters of men, an adversary to the devil, a destroyer of sin, and that which saves mankind therefrom.

The gift of grace, under the gospel administration, is the fulfilling of that promised covenant, which God, by the mouth of his prophet Jeremiah, promised to make with the

house of Jacob, which was, *that he would write his law in their hearts, and put his Spirit in their inward parts*: that his people might have a rule of righteousness in themselves to guide their steps by.

As the princes of the earth rule and govern their people by an outward law, so the Lord resolved to rule and govern his people by an inward law: they should have no need to turn over the leaves of a book, as the seed of Abraham under the first covenant had, to know how they should walk in right paths; but they should know, by looking into their own hearts, what was right, and what was wrong; what they might do, and what they should leave undone; what was just, and what was unjust; what was pleasing to God, and what was not: for this law is a light, that enlightens men's souls, as the sun in the firmament enlighteneth our houses, shewing what is clean, and what is unclean; what may remain, and what is to be swept out.

For as God made man in the beginning humble, lowly, meek, merciful, pure, peaceable, just, and faithful; he would have all men to be so. But forasmuch as nothing less than the good Spirit of God, in the inward parts of man, can reduce any of us to such a qualification, God hath given to every man a measure

thereof, to enlighten his understanding, and to guide him in the path of life and salvation; and this measure, being the free gift of God, is by the apostle in the text, and many other places of scripture, called grace.

QUEST. 2. Where doth the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, appear?

ANSW. The great God, in his infinite wisdom and everlasting love, hath placed his royal seed and plant of renown in the hearts of the sons and daughters of men, for that is the chief garrison of the soul; there the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, may be found: from thence, until it come to be veiled by clouds of iniquity, it shews itself a witness against all unrighteousness and ungodliness.

As every evil motion and temptation, that leads to sin, appears within; so the grace of God, that is given to men, to save from sin, appears also within.

There is not a man born into the world, if he have lived to commit sin, but hath felt and known in himself rebukes for sin; and these rebukes are the appearances of grace, and called in scripture, light, and true light; for it manifests every work of darkness; it shews us both when and wherein we have done amiss: and this it hath done in all ages.

God hath not in any age left himself without a witness in the hearts of men, to declare his righteousness, truth, and faithfulness. But there is as much difference between the appearance of grace, and the power of grace to salvation; the light of righteousness, and that fulness which enables us to lead a life of righteousness; as is between a seed that is sown, and the herb when it is come to full growth: but the one leads to the other; and it is he that attains to the fulness of grace, that comes to lead a sober, righteous, godly life in this present world.

It was said of Jesus, the second Adam, *That he was full of grace*; and we may believe it from the fruits he brought forth in this life: he was humble, lowly, meek, patient, peaceable, just, and faithful; he resisted the devil in all his temptations, led a blameless life, fulfilled all righteousness, and in the whole course of his life, retained what the first Adam soon lost, namely, the image of God: and whosoever grows in grace until he attains to his stature, namely, to be filled therewith, may be called, as Job was, *A perfect man*.

And as the appearances of grace are inward, so are all its discoveries, revelations, and teachings; whosoever applies himself to man for a right knowledge of the things of God, goes



to a wrong school ; *For, as Paul truly said, that which may be known of God is manifest within.*

The proud, the covetous, the envious, and other ungodly persons, may for a time, and a long time, have the appearances of grace ; they may have rebukes for sin ; but if by such rebukes, they do not learn righteousness, they grow not in grace, neither doth grace grow in them ; all such hide their talent, and in time, for want of improvement, come to have it quite taken from them ; and being left graceless, lead a wicked and ungodly life in this present world.

QUEST. 3. If the grace of God appear unto all, and if there be a sufficiency therein to make them godly, how comes it to pass, that there are so many ungodly ?

ANSW. As the grace of God that bringeth salvation, appears unto all men, so motions of sin, that lead to destruction, appear unto all men, and commonly make the first appearance. All men have evil motions and temptations in themselves to sin, before they are acquainted with any rebukes in themselves for sin ; and the work of the devil is to make forbidden things appear desirable, the world and the vanities thereof to be full of pleasantness : and as our affections come to be taken therewith,



as we make the world our delight, and pursue after it, we depart from God; and though grace may make many appearances, though the good spirit of God may long strive with us, though we have in ourselves many checks and rebukes, and are thereby made sensible that our ways and our doings displease God, yet we are prone to persevere therein; and through a continued perseverance, sin grows and comes to have dominion over us: and the devil making one ungodly person a bait to catch another, is the very cause why we have so many ungodly livers in the world.

The further any man goeth from God and godliness, the less desire he hath to return; and the more delight he takes in the vanities of this world, the less felicity he beholds in the things of God. And as long as one spark of grace remains, the devil will follow all such with his temptations; for he can call none really his own, until they become quite graceless; and many such graceless ones would be apparently found, were not wickedness limited by an outward law.

Were we, as Israel once was, without a king; or as the inhabitants of Laish, who had no magistrate in the land, to put them to shame for any thing; we should find many who bear the Christian name to be of the devil's nature,

working all manner of wickedness. And so it highly concerns all who have the appearances of grace, from the rebukes thereof, to learn righteousness, that it may grow in them, and be their guide : for nothing but grace, and obedience unto righteousness, makes any of us differ from the worst of men in vile actions; for as all righteousness proceeds from a fulness of grace, so the aboundings of wickedness is through a deprivation of grace.

QUEST. 4. What manner of salvation doth the grace of God bring ?

ANSW. As the appearances of grace are rebukes for sin, so the salvation that grace brings, is a saving from sin.

If grace teach men to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, grace saves good men from sin in this present world.

We read of an angel that appeared to Joseph, saying, *Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost, and she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.*

Nothing defaceth the image of God in man but sin ; nor can any thing recover that image again, but our being saved from sin.

The mortification of sin brings men to their beginning: the more humble, lowly, meek, and merciful any man is, the more he resembles his Maker; the more patient, peaceable, just, upright, and faithful any man is found, the more conformable he is to the life and nature of Christ.

Paul told the Ephesians, that they were saved by grace; and what were they saved from, but from the power of Sin and Satan? And where was this grace but in their own hearts? Before they came, through turning from their iniquities, to have grace in their hearts, they walked, as thousands now do, according to the course of the world, not denying, but fulfilling the desires of their minds; and all such are, as they then were, without Christ, without light, without life, without the sense or feeling of any thing in them that was of God; aliens from the government of Christ's eternal Spirit in their inward parts, and strangers from the promised covenant; knowing no more of a law in their hearts, to guide their steps by, than the ungodly men of this age do.

But when they came to be quickened by Christ, and to have in their own hearts his good Spirit, and to be led thereby, they were saved from sin, they came to have new natures, and so to be new creatures; and then they were no longer strangers to Christ's government by

a law in themselves, but subjects to righteousness, citizens with saints, and of God's family. To which blessed state we might all come, did we but embrace the gift of God for our salvation, and give ourselves up to be taught and guided thereby; which would be our wisdom, since nothing else can subdue Satan, save from sin, and enable us to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

Saving from sin, on this side the grave, may, to such as are strangers to God's salvation, seem an incredible thing; but were they so well acquainted with the power of grace, as too many are with the strength of sin, they would say, *Christ's yoke was easy.*

Hath it not been the saying of many ungodly men, *That they would amend their lives, if they had but power?*

Where the hearts of any, through a perseverance in sin, come to be filled with unrighteousness, Sin and Satan have such power over the faculties of their souls, that they cannot resist evil motions and temptations; but must yield thereunto, and suffer themselves to be led away thereby, though they know it is to evil practices.

And if sin have such dominion over ungodly men, why may not grace have as much do-



minion over godly men ? Surely good Joseph found such a power in his soul, when he said, *How can I do this evil, and sin against God ?*

Grace, being a divine inspiration, commands the hearts of all good men ; and the heart being the chief garrison of the soul, commands every member of the body, holding them in with bit and bridle.

The ear of a gracious man is shut from hearkening to fables and evil reports ; his eye is turned aside from gazing upon vanity ; his tongue is not suffered to curse, swear, lie, or to be employed in any idle communication ; his hand is limited from taking of bribes to pervert justice, and from taking by violence, or otherwise, any thing that is not his own : his feet are restrained from going with the drunkard to excess, or with a lewd woman to the chamber of wantonness, or with rude persons to rioting, revelling, or any other rude exercise : and by this dominion, that grace comes to have over us, the Lord saves his people from their sins. And as we live in subjection to this power, we are servants to another prince ; sin and satan have lost their dominion over us ; and this is God's salvation ; by this we come to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.



QUEST. 5. Who did the apostle mean when he said, *Teaching us*; was it the world in general, or only some particulars?

ANSW.<sup>r</sup> Christ was given as a light to the Gentiles; to which, as they became obedient, he was also their leader out of all ungodliness, and they came to live under the government of his eternal Spirit in their own hearts: for such only the Lord owns for his people, and none but such can call him Lord in truth.

Grace appears unto all men: every one that is born into the world hath a light in his soul, that shews him the motions of sin, and rebukes him when, and as oft as, he yields thereunto.

All righteousness is learned out of the book of the law, when it comes to be written in our hearts; but that law being the law of the Spirit of life, we must be quickened by Christ, and have the Spirit of life, before we can learn from that law.

Our ancestors made it their concern to teach youth good manners, as temperance, moderation, chastity, civil behaviour, to be dutiful to parents, to shew respect to their elders, to be circumspect in their communication, swift to hear, slow to speak, to answer with meekness and gravity, to be true to their trust, faithful in their promises, just in their dealings, keep-

ing to their word in all things, that their word might be taken in all cases without doubt or scruple ; every one to know his place, and abide therein.

Now as we turn from ungodliness to sobriety, we bring forth all these fruits in our lives ; for grace teacheth all this and much more ; but since we find so few thus qualified, we may certainly conclude, that though grace appears unto all, all are not obedient thereto.

QUEST, 6. We must confess that we have known inward rebukes for sin ; we have been checked, reprov'd, and convicted in ourselves after we have done amiss ; but we have not found any thing in and of ourselves, when strong motions and temptations have arisen in our minds, to restrain us with bit and bridle from doing amiss ; and to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts in our own strength, seems too hard for any mortal ; especially when any lordly sin hath got the dominion over us : what can we do in such a case ?

ANSW. Could man, in his own strength, deliver his soul from under the power of sin and satan, return unto God, and lead a sober, righteous, godly life in this present world, there would have been no need of a Redeemer, no occasion for a Saviour, no use of a quickening Spirit, to give life to our souls, no necessity of

God's writing his law in our hearts, for a rule to guide our steps by ; no want of a light in our souls to shew us where the devil spreads his net, casts his bait, lays his gin, and displays his false colours : but man can no more deliver his soul from the power of sin and satan without the help of the Lord, than Israel, when they were in Egypt, could go free from the servitude of Pharaoh without his help ; therefore grace appears unto all men for their aid. And though the appearance of grace may seem but small aid to set our souls free from the servitude of sin and satan, and to conduct us in the way of life and salvation, 'till we come to the end of our race, to live under Christ's government ; it is not smaller than Israel's aid was, to bring them from under the servitude of Pharaoh, and conduct them to the promised land.

Israel's aid was but two aged men (the younger of them being about eighty years old), having no weapons but a rod in one of their hands ; yet by this small means, God being with them, they brought from under the power and servitude of Pharaoh, six hundred thousand men, besides women and children : and grace, being a divine inspiration, is aid enough to bring six hundred thousand millions from under the servitude of sin and power of satan, did men but

confide therein, and give themselves up to be guided thereby.

Inward rebukes, if we have regard thereunto, beget a fear in men, as the shaking of the rod doth in children; and as *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*, so it is the beginning of a reformation of our lives.

If I be checked in myself for making a lie, and have regard to that which checked me, I shall be afraid of making another; or if I find in myself rebukes for not keeping my promise, or for doing any thing amiss, and have regard to such rebukes, I shall be afraid to do the like, lest the next rebukes be sharper; and as this holy fear abides in us, we come to deny ungodliness, and in denying ungodliness we learn righteousness: but such as find in themselves rebukes for sin, and have no regard thereunto, are like unto children that carry horn-books at their sides, and learn nothing therein: they are no scholars in the school of grace.

We have read, that *Reproofs of instruction are the way to life*, and many good men may be found at this day, who will acknowledge that they had never come to a life of righteousness, had they not had reproofs of instruction from their own hearts, by which they came to deny unrighteousness. For where rebukes for sin are received in love, the Lord doth not leave



such souls, but follows them therewith ; and the more vices they subdue, the more, in the light of the Lord, shall they see, and the more power shall they receive from him to overcome them.

If one plague will not make Pharaoh willing to let Israel go, he shall have another, and another, until he be willing ; and if one rebuke will not make us willing to part with a beloved sin, we shall have another, yea, trouble and terror.

Paul knew terror before he came to find peace with God, and peace in his own conscience ; he was acquainted with judgment, before he came to obtain victory. Nothing hath power to break the bonds of captivity, and set us free from the law of sin and death, but the law of the Spirit of life in our own hearts.

Israel's main enemies were not subdued as soon as they came out of Egypt, but when they came into the promised land ; neither is the body of sin made weak as soon as we turn from unrighteousness, but when we come into the life of righteousness, to have grace before our faces, as Joshua was before their faces : for sin cannot stand in the face of righteousness, no more than the Canaanites could stand in the face of Joshua.



And if any lordly sin have got dominion over us, I shall not say, as one formerly said, *Fight not with great nor small, but with the king of Israel*; but rather when violent motions arise, stand still, and the Lord will fight for us; for as our hearts come to be possessed with grace, if the enemy should come in as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord, being in our inward parts, will lift up a standard against him.

The Lord's controversy is not, as men vainly imagine, against the sinner, but against the author of sin; his appearances are all in love to save the sinner, and by his judgments to weaken the strength of sin: for man once freed from sin, is as willing to lead a righteous life, as any ungodly man can be to lead a wicked life, and more joy he hath, though the world cannot see it.

QUEST. 7. What may truly and properly be called a *sober, righteous, godly life*?

ANSW. A sober life, many may, in some measure, be acquainted with, but a righteous, godly life, is rarely considered.

Devotion, which consists in hearing of sermons, reading of good books, performing of family duties, &c. hath for many ages been accounted godliness, and the practitioners thereof righteous people.

These things are not to be discommended, where they are done in sincerity ; but these are not the true character of righteousness and godliness.

This and much more might be found amongst the Scribes and Pharisees, yet Jesus told his disciples, that *Except their righteousness exceeded the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they could in no wise enter into the kingdom of God.*

And who is there amongst us, that are called Christians, but one day in seven will be in the exercise of something that is called godliness, though they have not learned to deny ungodliness ? And such as have not learned to deny ungodliness, are far from such a righteous, godly life, as the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ teacheth all its followers.

One way to know what is righteous and godly, is to consider what is unrighteous and ungodly ; for the one is opposite to the other, as light to darkness : and these things that follow, most will acknowledge to be unrighteous and ungodly, viz. drunkenness, whoredom, theft, envy, hatred, bloodshed, swearing, cursing, lying, extortion, fraud, doubledealing, talebearing, and whispering, which is the seed of strife : all these things are unrighteous, and pride, above many evils, most ungodly.

These are not fruits proceeding from the good Spirit of God, but from the evil spirit of this world; not issues of life, but streams that flow from a corrupt spring; these come not from the teaching of grace in our hearts, but from evil motions that arise in our minds: these make us sinners before the Lord; and as long as we live in the practice of any of them, we shall not be righteous in his sight: those that brought forth fruits of this kind have, in all ages of the world, been testified against, as unrighteous and ungodly livers. These are infirmities of the soul, that millions of money have been given to physicians to cure; but behold, health hath not been by them restored. These are weeds that thousands have been hired to pluck up, but to this day have not made clean gardens, nor ever will by all the art they have, for Christ is the Physician of souls; none can take away the sins of the world, but he alone.

Whosoever thinks to attain to a righteous, godly life, but by the teaching of grace in his own heart, deceiveth his own soul.

Men may lop, or hinder the growth of many branches of iniquity that appear outwardly, but cannot take away the cause which is within; and until the cause is removed, there can be no thorough cure.

As grace hath a spring, so iniquity hath a root, and the ax that smites at this root is in Christ's hands; and what is the ax but the law of the Spirit of life, a law of righteousness in our inward parts? This wrought a perfect cure in Paul; this made him a free man, a good man, and a preacher; and that which cured Paul, and set him free from the power of sin, hath a sufficiency in it to set all men free therefrom.

*Walk in the Spirit*, said Paul, *and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh*; that is the only remedy, that is the soul-healing salve; and what is the walking in the Spirit, but following this leading of grace in our own hearts? For grace, as it comes to have the rule over us, brings down all exalted thoughts, abaseth pride, shuts out covetousness, gives no place unto wrath, reduceth us to a cool, quiet frame of spirit, in which frame we can bear and suffer. Grace will not suffer us to do any unjust thing, nor allow us to speak an ill word, much less to be drunk, commit whoredom, steal, or any such abominable vices: for it is the promised Spirit of truth that leads into all truth, leads out of all error, and so brings salvation indeed.

No man can lead a righteous life, 'till a right spirit comes to have the whole possession of his heart; for from the good treasures of the heart



proceed all good living ; for that is the guide, and this guide being a divine nature, makes us heavenly minded.

Nothing exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, but the righteousness that proceeds from a right Spirit in our own hearts ; for that is not our own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ.

As murder, adultery, theft, which are some of the worst of evils, proceed out of the heart, whilst the evil spirit of this world hath the possession thereof ; so goodwill to all men, which is a principal virtue, proceeds out of the heart, when the good Spirit of God comes to make its abode there ; but this abode is not known, 'till, by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, the spirit of this world is denied, and thereby the heart cleansed ; then, and not 'till then, can we come to know *the Lord our Righteousness*.

He that is reduced to such a qualification, as to have goodwill to all men, is of all men most godly ; for as God, in his unlimited love to mankind, *causeth his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and his rain to descend on the just and on the unjust* ; so he that hath goodwill to all, will not wrong any, oppress any, shew violence to any, or speak evil of any, but be ready to serve all men in love and faithfulness ;



and this is a true character of a sober, righteous, godly man ; such is converted indeed, and become a weaned child, and is entered into that kingdom that consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

And since this reformation is only and alone by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, give me leave to say, with the prophet, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and drink ; every one that hath a desire in his soul after righteousness, turn in to the grace of God in his own heart.* The water that the prophet invited all thirsty souls unto, is no other than that which Christ giveth ; and whosoever drinketh thereof thirsteth no more, but hath, as many at this day can witness, a well in himself, not only issuing, but flowing up to eternal life.

The grace of God is a free gift, without money and without price ; nothing is required on man's part, but to hearken thereunto, and take counsel therefrom ; *Hear, said the prophet, and your souls shall live.*

Adam, hearkening to evil motions, died unto righteousness, and so do all ungodly men ; but he that hearkens to the voice of grace, lives unto righteousness, and from the flowings of that spring that he hath in himself, leads a sober, righteous, godly life in this present world.

Hearing and reading, at the best, tend to instruct us in what we ought to do ; but godliness is doing what grace teacheth ; and all such doings are right and good.

QUEST. 8. Were not the scriptures written for our learning, and are not they a sufficient rule of righteousness ?

ANSW. The scriptures are a rule ; but who can walk by that rule, unless he be inspired with the good Spirit of God ?

The house of Jacob had not only ten commands written on tables of stone, but many other statutes and judgments, proceeding from a righteous judge, written in their books, and not only read, but also expounded unto them every sabbath day, that they might walk in righteous paths ; but though they had the words of God in their books, many had not the fear of God in their hearts ; and so, though they had a great zeal for an outward worship and form of devotion, yet they were ungodly in life and conversation.

And what shall I say of us who are called Christians ? We have the words of God, and the words of Christ, the words of the prophets, and the words of the apostles in our books ; we have large rules of righteousness, but do we guide our steps by our rule ? Or can we ?

The Christian's rule of righteousness is Christ's direction ; let us, who say the scripture is our rule, examine our abilities to walk by our rule : Are we lights to the world ? Do our good works glorify God, or shame our Christian profession ? Are we so far from committing adultery, that we have not so much as a lustful thought ? Are we so far guided by the truth, that every word, that proceeds out of our mouths by way of promise, is sure and steadfast ? Can we *refrain from smiting when we are smitten* ? Can we *give our cloak to him that sues us at the law, and wrongfully takes away our coat* ? Can we *love our enemies* ? Can we *bless them that curse us* ? Can we *do good to them that hate us* ? Can we *pray for them that despitefully use us* ? Can we *depend on God's providence, without taking care what we shall eat, or what we shall drink* ? Can we *do unto all men, in all things whatsoever, as we would that they should do unto us* ? This is Christ's yoke ; can we bow our hearts and minds thereunto ? This is Christ's burthen, and can we bear it ? He said, *His yoke was easy, and his burthen light* ; but if these things be too hard, and too heavy a burthen to us, it is because we have not his grace and his Spirit ; we have a Christian name, but are not in the Christian nature ; we have a rule, but have not power to walk by our rule ; and then what good does our rule do us ?

If ever we think to walk by scripture rules, if ever we intend to keep our Lord's command, and if we would lead a righteous, godly life in this present world, we must turn in to the grace of God in our own hearts, for that gives us power to keep to our rule.

It was for want of grace, that the seed of Abraham could not keep Moses's commands ; it is for want of grace, that Christians do not keep Christ's commands : he lays no other burthen on us than what he bore himself ; the fulness of grace that dwelt in him, made all these things easy to him ; and, as we grow in grace 'till we come to be filled therewith, they will be easy unto us : grace mortifies sin, and where sin is mortified, nothing is easier than to lead a righteous life.

OBJ. But some may say, our dependance for life and salvation is not on works of righteousness, but on faith : we believe, and therefore hope to be saved.

ANSW. I know that is most men's dependance, and faith we all think we have : but is it a faith that purifies the heart, and makes our bodies fit temples for the Holy Ghost ?

Paul put the Corinthians on an examination of themselves, on a trial and proof of their faith ; and it would not be amiss, if all that



account themselves believers, did prove their faith by the same touchstone ; *Know ye not*, said Paul, *that Christ is in you except you be reprobates?*

Was Christ in the Corinthians ? And is he not in all men that turn from ungodliness, and come to have their hearts purified ?

How can we know the only true God, if we do not behold his presence ? How can we know our Saviour, if he be not in us, to save us from our spiritual enemies, as Joshua was in the camp of Israel, to save them from their outward enemies ? And this is life eternal, not only to hear of a God and a Saviour, but to know him ; to feel the power of God, and to be witnesses of Christ's salvation ; these are believers, and true believers, for their eyes have seen what they believe.

Faith and works of righteousness go together ; he that hath the one hath both, and grace is the spring from whence both proceed ; the reprobate, the ungodly, the graceless, have neither.

QUEST. 9. If inward and spiritual grace be sufficient to teach us our duty towards God and man, and to establish us in righteousness ; wherefore was there an outward ministry, and to what end were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, given to the church ?

ANSW. Paul, as he told king Agrippa, was made a minister and a witness: he was a witness of the powerful operation of grace in his own soul, and so could tell others what it could do for them.

In the state of degeneration all men are strangers to grace; they know not the Lord; and the work of the ministry is to open the understandings of all such, and to turn them to this heavenly teacher; since nothing else can enable them to lead a sober, righteous, godly life in this present world.

And as some were ordained to plant, so others were given to water, that no young plant might wither before it came to be rooted and grounded.

We find that, in the primitive times, some declined from what they had attained to, for that they kept not with their guide; and with such Paul was forced to travail in birth again: for as plants are not grounded as soon as they are planted, so men are not established in righteousness as soon as they are turned from unrighteousness; and such as were strong, were to watch over the weak, and lend them a helping hand in their travails, until they all came, in the unity of the Spirit, to be perfect men, and then there is no more need of

man's help ; and we are all perfect men, when a right Spirit comes to have the whole government in us.

But who are fit to plant and water ? No ungodly men, for such have not the Spirit of Jesus, such know not the way of God's salvation themselves, and so cannot direct others thereto, nor lend them a hand therein ; but such as are, what Paul after his conversion was, not only ministers, but witnesses of what they testify ; or such as have travailed in the way of God's salvation themselves, and are come, through the teachings of grace, to that strength and perfection, as to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.*

A  
T R I A L  
OF  
CHRISTIANITY,  
FROM THE  
Life and Nature of CHRIST, and true  
CHRISTIANS:

With a Description of true GODLINESS, and the Way by  
which we may conform our Lives thereunto.



**M**ANY professors of Christianity, in our present age, conclude that Godliness consisteth in hearing, reading, praying, praising, &c. which are all good exercises, if rightly performed, and may be called Christian duties; for all true Christians are required, and, by the good Spirit of God in their own hearts, often stirred up to perform them.

Howbeit, the performance of these and such like things alone, is no certain proof of Godliness; Christianity cannot be known thereby, for as there was a more excellent righteousness than what was found in the zealous Pharisees, so there is a more excellent godliness than what appears in most professed Christians.



For hearing, reading, praying, praising, with other exercises of that nature, may be imitated; the ungodly, as well as the godly, the formalist, as well as the sincere, may be found in the practice of such things; but true godliness cannot be imitated, being the natural effects of the rule and government of a right Spirit, and may be truly called the issues of life, which none can bring forth, but such who are Christians indeed.

True godliness is supernatural, and so above the reach of Adam's offspring, who, whilst they continue in the fall, are servants to sin; we must be reduced to a godlike nature before we can bring forth a godly conversation: grapes cannot be expected from thorns, nor figs from thistles; the tree must be made good before the fruit can be good; a righteous life is the natural effects of a right Spirit; our lights cannot shine forth before men, until we are enlightened with the light of Christ: without a true conversion, there can be no true conversation; for all men, in the nature of fallen Adam, being ungodlike, until they are raised by Christ the second Adam, cannot live godlike.

The life and nature of Christ, all true Christians, who have the Spirit of Christ, may find in themselves; and others may have some sense

thereof by reading and well considering the contents of the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew, where it is said, that *Jesus seeing the multitude, went up into a mountain, and when he was set, his disciples came unto him, and he opened his mouth and taught them*; and what he taught his disciples then, he teacheth all true Christians now; though he ascended, the Holy Spirit that dwelt in him descended, and did then, doth now, and to the end of the world will, tabernacle with all the Lord's redeemed to be their teacher; and as many as walk after this Spirit are taught of Christ, and walk in his footsteps; for as no vine beareth one kind of grape, and the branches another, so all the members of Christ answer the life of Christ in their conversations; they are naturally humble, lowly, meek, merciful, patient, peaceable, just, upright, honest, and faithful: a Christian is not known by his words or his devotion; but by his works, his nature, his life, and his conversation.

I shall not insist on all particulars contained in the fore-mentioned chapters, but chiefly on the five following exhortations or commands of our Lord; the least of which, for a true trial of Christianity, is more to be observed than that command, Luke xxii. 19. *This do in remembrance of me*; for the proud as well as the

humble, the cruel as well as the merciful, the fraudulent as well as the just, the ungodly as well as the godly, can conform to the one, but cannot conform to the other.

The true trial of Christianity is to be found in the life and nature of Christ ; if the Spirit of Christ have the rule in us, these following fruits will be brought forth by us.

1. In all our communication, our yea will be yea, and our nay, nay ; the word that goeth out of our lips will be sure.

He that is a Christian indeed hath no necessity in himself, nor need to be urged by others, to bind his soul with an oath to perform his word, for the law of the Spirit of life in his own heart, constrains him so to do.

Christians in their communications weigh their words before they utter them, with their capacities to perform them ; knowing that a promise cannot be broken without violating the righteous law of God in their own hearts ; and whenever such violence is done, terror ensues ; and this makes good men, who live under the government of Christ, dread much more to break their words, than others do to forfeit their bonds ; and this holy dread makes our yea to be yea, and our nay to be nay ; this

makes us cautious in our promises, and careful in our performances ; the exhortation may be read in scripture, but the binding tie must be known in our own hearts : all who have the scripture have this rule ; but unless we have a principle of life in ourselves, we cannot walk by this rule ; and we must not only have such a principle, but we must also improve it by a continued practice, before it comes to be our life, our centre, and our nature ; 'till then we may say, *These things we should do* ; but cannot say, *These things we do* ; and so witness against ourselves, that, though we have the scriptures, we walk not according to the scriptures ; though we have the words of Christ, we are not in the life and nature of Christ ; our yea is not yea, and our nay, nay, in our communication ; our words and our promises are not steadfast and sure.

Swearing, in the communication of Christians, is superfluous ; for where truth rules in the heart, there cannot be falsehood in the lips. Prove a professed Christian by this rule, measure him by this line, weigh him in this balance : if his yea be yea, and his nay, nay, in all his communication ; if he be a man of his word at all times ; if his performances be one with his promises, he abides in the doctrine of Christ ; and this is an evident demonstration that he is a Christian indeed. But if these performances be wanting, though he has a



Christian name, he is not in the Christian nature ; for, as I said before, what manner of grape the vine beareth, the branches thereof, if they continue in the vine, bear the same.

The second exhortation or command of our Lord was this, *Resist not evil* ; and this was not only his doctrine, but his life and nature, as we may plentifully read in scripture. Though he met with revilings, reproaches, buffetings, and cruel usage, we do not find that he was once moved thereby, much less that ever he resisted ; but gave his face to the smiter, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair : and when he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, *he was as a sheep dumb before the shearer, he opened not his mouth* ; so much as to say, What have I done ? Or, Why is it thus ?

Now the fruits of the Spirit, in head and members, captain and followers, Christ and Christians, are one in nature : for as Christ was humble, lowly, meek, patient, peaceable, under all his sufferings, so are Christians, if Christians indeed ; they render not evil for evil, they desire not an eye for an eye, nor a tooth for a tooth ; revenge of any kind is far from them ; but as patience and forbearance was the life and nature of Christ, so it is the life and nature of all Christians, as they grow in grace, and come to the fulness of the stature of Christ.

And by this also, professors of Christianity may prove themselves, whether they are Christians indeed ; for it is the deed that manifesteth all things, for bad men may have good words : forms may be imitated, but the patience, the meekness, the forbearance that dwelt in Christ, and may be found in all true Christians, cannot be imitated. If any vice have got head in us, make what profession we will, the fruit of that vice will be brought forth by us ; we shall be proud, we shall be covetous, we shall be envious : if we be reviled, we shall revile ; if we be smitten, we shall smite ; if we be sued at the law causelessly, we shall sue : whilst it is so, we are in the world's nature, its spirit hath the rule over us ; and not the lowly, meek, lamblike Spirit of Jesus.

The third exhortation or command of Christ was this, *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you.*

This also was not only the doctrine, but the life and nature of Christ ; and as it is the life and nature of Christ, so it is the life and nature of Christians, who are thoroughly leavened with the Spirit of Christ.

No man, having the Spirit of Jesus, and living under the government thereof, can hate the person of any man ; for by creation we are all

the workmanship of God's hands; and all true Christians know that enmity, hatred, cursing, spite, and persecution, proceed not from men or women as they are the Lord's creation, but as they have lost this image, and thereby become emptied of good, and filled with all evil: for as an evil spirit comes to have the rule over us, evil fruits will be brought forth by us.

Could we but see ourselves, did we but observe our own natures, with the fruits we bring forth in our lives, we might easily judge of ourselves and others, whether we were converts or not; whether the Spirit of Christ, or the spirit of this world, had the rule in us, and over us: for the course of our lives, especially in times of trial, declares who are led by the meek Spirit of Jesus, and who are not; who are leavened with the leaven of righteousness, and who are not; who lead a sober, upright, godly life, and who do not; for it is not our words, but our conversation that manifests what spirit hath rule in us and over us.

For until, by conversion, our natures come to be changed, we cannot love enemies, having as much enmity against them, as they have against us; we cannot bless them, we cannot pray for them; we shall be forward to do them hurt, but far from doing them good.

Come, professors of Christianity, lay aside your forms that you have long contended about; measure yourselves by this line, try yourselves by this touchstone; are you reduced to such a frame of spirit as to *love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you?* This is a true character of Christianity; this declares us to be Christians indeed.

But if our natures be averse to these things, let our profession be what it will, we bear not the image of God; we are not the children of our heavenly Father, *for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust*: and were we but truly converted, were our natures thoroughly changed, our lives would be conformable; we should be Christians indeed.

A fourth branch of the life, nature, and doctrine of Christ was manifested in these words, *Take no thought what ye shall eat, what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on; but seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.*

And what is this kingdom that all true Christians should first seek? It cannot be any thing above our reach; it must be that kingdom that Jesus compared to a lost piece of sil-



ver ; it must be an acquaintance with that Spirit, and the government thereof, that, from the beginning, the great God placed in the hearts of men, to be their instructor in paths of righteousness : which Spirit alone for some time dwelt in the first Adam, but was more abundantly manifested in Christ the second Adam, and so called in scripture the Spirit of Christ ; for it always dwelt in him, and was not only his life, but the life that he gives to all true believers, for their ransom from under the power of sin and satan, and so necessary to be first sought ; for until an humble, lowly, meek, lamblike Spirit be raised in us, and come to have the rule over us, we know not the Lord, nor can depend on his Providence : for the rule and government of this Spirit reduceth every member to an excellent qualification ; and as many as are taught thereby, learn therefrom *in all estates to be content.*

This was the life and nature of Christ ; *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head ;* yet he was content ; his thoughts run not out on things pertaining to the body : it was meat and drink unto him to do his Father's will, and to finish the work that he was sent to do ; a work that none before him ever did, namely, the fulfilling of all righteousness, by doing the thing

that was right in the whole course of his life, as a precedent to all his followers.

And as many as have found the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and are come to live under the rule and government of a right Spirit, have the mind of Christ: though they live in the world, their thoughts run not out after the world. A true Christian conversation is, to be diligent in our callings, moderate in our expenses, and content with our estates; whosoever are reduced to a state of temperance and moderation, take but little *thought what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewithal they shall be clothed*; they delight in justice, equity, truth, and faithfulness, and their thoughts are exercised therein; and, resting on God's Providence, their honest endeavour is attended with a blessing.

And here professors of Christianity may also prove themselves; this is a true measuring line, a path that no man can tread, but such as have the Spirit of Jesus: all ungodly men seek the world first, I may say first and last; the riches of the world, the honour of the world, the pleasures of the world, and the praise of the world; *What they shall eat, or what they shall drink*, to please their appetites: *What they shall put on*, to be accounted great in the world, and to have the pre-eminence above and

before their fellow-creatures ; their thoughts run far more, how they shall be conformable to the fashions of the world, than how they shall be conformable to the life, nature, and doctrine of Christ ; which is more heathenlike than Christianlike, and not effected by the most part without much dishonesty.

This is the natural state of the sons and daughters of men, whilst they continue in a state of degeneracy, aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to that covenant of promise that the Lord made with the house of Jacob. And to a better state none can come, but by seeking and finding the kingdom of God and his righteousness, or the rule and government of Christ, by his eternal Spirit, in their own hearts ; there the seed is sown ; there the leaven is laid ; there the pearl of great price is found, but not without digging deep : for whilst vice is uppermost, virtue is lowermost : whilst sin reigns, the power of grace is not felt ; the bringing down of the one is the exaltation of the other ; there must be a death unto sin, before there can be a new birth unto righteousness ; and there must be a new birth unto righteousness, and a growth in righteousness, before we can centre in that content, as to take *no thought what we shall eat, what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed*. And so it is every man's principal concern, first, to

seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; first, to know the rule and government of a right Spirit in himself; for this qualifies him, and makes him capable of leading a Christian life, and of performing Christian duties both to God and man.

The fifth and last branch of the life, nature, and doctrine of Christ, that I shall here insist upon, is this, *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, for that is the law and the prophets*; for this is that the righteous Lord God requireth from his people in all ages.

This doing is accounted by many zealous professors of Christianity, in our present age, a moral righteousness, and so but a small part, or rather no part, of true godliness; but rightly considered, all actual righteousness, if it proceed from a right spirit, is in itself the true righteousness of faith; and that moral, or of no authority, which is performed from a carnal mind, in imitation of good men's practices, but out of their life and nature: for if the tree be known by its fruits, fruit manifesteth the nature of the tree. If our God be, as certainly he is, righteous in all his ways, and just in all his works, no people on the face of the earth are more godlike, none bear his image more exact, than such whose conversations are



upright, honest, and just ; and nothing can be more just, than to *do unto others in all things, whatsoever we would that they should do unto us.*

This is the excellent righteousness ; this exceeds not only the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, but the righteousness of most professors of Christianity ; for hereby we walk in Christ's footsteps, we fulfil both the law and the prophets.

Moses, from an admiration of the justice and equity that the Lord required from the sons and daughters of men, under the administration of the law, uttered these words, *What nation is there so great, who hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law that I set before you ?* And doth the law of the Spirit of life require less righteousness from Christians, than that outward law did from the Jews ? I tell you nay, but rather more, for that more power is given to all true Christians to perform acts of righteousness.

Were the understandings of all who are called Christians enlightened to see themselves as they are, or had they but hearts to prove themselves by this Christian rule, measure themselves by this straight line, weigh themselves in this equal balance, the following sorts of men and women, with many others, would no more pass for true Christians, in God's account, than

clipped and counterfeit money, when it came to the balance, did in men's accounts.

As first, all such who in suits of law, by perverting justice, or other subtle contrivances, possess themselves of houses, lands, or goods, that they have no right unto.

Secondly, all such who by violent robbing, or private stealing, take that which is not their own.

Thirdly, all such who detain the wages of the hireling, or grind on the necessities of the poor, by beating down the value of their labour 'till they cannot live thereby.

Fourthly, all such who in trade or dealing use light weights, short measures, or any other kind of deceit.

Fifthly, all such who cast their burthens on other men's shoulders, and go free themselves.

Sixthly, all such as either give or take bribes to effect things that are not right.

Seventhly, all such who take wages to serve lord or master, and are not faithful to their trust.

Eighthly, all such as make contracts, and perform not the same; or engage themselves by promises, and have no regard to their word.

Ninthly, all such who by evil reports, whisperings, or backbitings, sow the seeds of strife, create prejudice, or quench charity.

None of these abide in the doctrine of Christ, none of these do as they would be done unto ; though they bear a Christian name, they are strangers to a Christian life ; they live not under Christ's government ; they are not swayed by a sceptre of righteousness ; and so are not godlike.

Godliness and Christianity bear but one image ; and if we would know the nature of godliness, let us consider the nature of ungodliness. All sober men will grant, that the proud, the covetous, the envious, the fraudulent, the extortioner, the swearer, the liar, &c. are ungodly ; and well they may, for where any such vice gets head, little of the image of God appears ; and if such things make men ungodlike, the contrary, which is humility, meekness, moderation, sobriety, truth, equity, and faithfulness, must needs make them godly.

To become ungodly is an easy thing ; for if our backs be turned on God, we have nothing in our eye but the world, and the vanities thereof, promising us such content, that little else is minded.

But the great difficulty is to become godly again ; though thousands are employed therein, little shew doth appear ; for in the eyes of degenerated men, there is no loveliness in that path ; and therefore the great query is, By

what way may the proud become humble, the wild become sober, the covetous become content, the fraudulent become just, the intemperate become moderate, the incontinent become chaste, the unfaithful become faithful? I know many will say, By hearing good ministers, reading good books, and conferring with good men. But these things have been tried, and that for several years, by many, yet no such change hath been wrought thereby.

If advice, exhortation, or counsel, would effect this great work, we need not go any farther than the heavenly sayings of Christ, in the aforesaid fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew; for if we could hear all the ministers in the world, read all the good books in the world, and confer with all the good men in the world, we could not have better advice, counsel, and exhortations, than are contained in those three chapters.

By hearing good ministers, reading good books, and conferring with good men, we may be convicted, but not thoroughly converted: for as virtue hath a spring, so vice hath a root that words will not reach. The strength of sin is the growth of that seed that the wicked one hath sown in the inward parts of the sons and daughters of men; and forasmuch as the cause is within, it is impossible it should be



wholly removed by things without ; but as the cause is within, so the cure must be within, by mortifying the body of sin, or bringing down the strength thereof, which is thus effected.

There is no unrighteous thing done, but there is an inward motion before there is any outward action ; and, by that light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world, if our eyes be inward, we may see those motions : and the way to mortify the body of sin, is to deny and turn from every such motion in the rising thereof, and so to crush the cockatrice in the shell ; for in their rising they are weak and powerless, and may be easily turned back. And if we do not suppress vice in the risings thereof, it will continue our lord ; but by every such denial, we bring down that which would arise and reign in us and over us, whether it be pride, covetousness, envy, falsehood, or any other vice whatever ; for the more denials are given to vice, the fewer assaults it will make ; the stronger the opposition, the weaker the attempt : as yielding gives vice ground to grow from a seed to a body, denials bring it down from a body to a seed ; so that though something thereof may abide in us, it doth not reign over us ; but is in subjection to the sceptre of righteousness, or rule of a right Spirit.

The ax is never laid to the root of the tree, 'till a reformation begins within ; the life of righteousness stands in the mortification of sin, which is an inward work. The spirit of this world must be brought down, before the Spirit of the Lord can be exalted in us ; but as a right Spirit comes to reign, we have as many motives to acts of righteousness, as ever we had to acts of unrighteousness ; and as we give ourselves in obedience thereunto, grace grows in us, and we grow in grace : it is a change in government that changeth our natures, and makes us to become new creatures.

By this we come to have the blessing as well as the birthright ; for the blessing is not to the exalted mind, but to the poor in spirit, to the merciful, to the pure in heart, who hunger and thirst, not after riches and honour, but after righteousness ; and all that hunger and thirst after it, will endeavour to satisfy their souls with an increase of it.

Now a talent is not improved by lying hid in a napkin ; if we would have more grace, we must exercise the measure we have attained unto ; we must live in the continual practice of right things ; we must keep in lowliness, meekness, temperance, patience, and other virtues ; we must be just in our dealings, as well in the smallest concern, as such as are more weighty ;

for a small matter turns the balance ; and if that small matter be wanting, things are not just, we do not even as we would be done by.

And this just dealing, as righteousness comes to reign, will be no hard thing, for as we accustom ourselves thereunto, it will be uppermost ; it will be as a diligent handmaid, ready to offer her service ; and every act of righteousness performed from the motives of a right spirit, hath its immediate reward ; which is not only an answer of peace, but joy in the Holy Ghost.

The way of life is the way of pleasantness, all her paths are peace ; nothing makes it to seem difficult, but the averfeness of our natures, when once corrupted, thereunto ; but as our natures come to be changed, we shall, from a sensible experience, say with David, *Thy commandments are exceedingly broad.*

I cannot recommend myself, nor any other, after we are awakened unto righteousness, to any better way for the reforming of our lives, than to turn in our eye to the gift of God in ourselves ; that by his candle we may see the rising of vice, and so deny it ; that the contrary, which is grace and truth, may rise and reign in us ; for that is our help, that is our strength, and that is our defence.

Words, whether retained in our memories,

or written in our books, are but weak instruments for this work, because the old man must be put off, which is an inward work ; and how is a sorry guest put off, or a man that urgeth for that we are not willing to grant, but by denying him, and turning from him ?

Should we enter into reasoning with any motions of sin, it is much if we be not overcome thereby, for that it is the nature of sin, not to turn back at a small denial, especially if it be a sin that hath prevailed over us before : but in turning therefrom we give it the repulse ; if it be not hearkened unto, it goes back.

And as the old man is put off, the new man is put on ; as vice is denied, virtue is embraced, and this new man makes us new creatures ; that which is created after God renews in us the image of God ; and bearing that image in holiness and righteousness, our conversations will declare us to be Christians indeed.

But if this old man with his deeds of darkness be not put off, the new man that is created after God's image in righteousness and true holiness, will not be put on ; and though we have been awakened unto righteousness, we shall fall asleep again, some in one form, and some in another, feeding on words without any sense of power or life ; and this second sleep appears to be a dead sleep ; for that though we may hear much spoken against pride, covetousness, en-



vy, &c. we are not as much as touched therewith, but live in the open shew thereof.

Did the sons and daughters of men, who are called Christians, make it their concern to be Christians indeed, by mortifying in themselves the spirit of this world, which is the original of all vice, they would be not only a happy, but a lovely people ; for by mortifying the body of sin, oppression would cease, all wrongs and injuries would determine and be at an end; love would spring both to God and man; grace would grow ; humility, meekness, moderation, and all other virtues would shew themselves; they would be another manner of people in their conversations; their words and their works would be just, upright, and honest; they would confide in one another without any scruple or doubt. What is more lovely than to be at all times, and on all occasions, just, upright, honest, and faithful, doing to all men in all things whatsoever, even as we would that they should do unto us ? A living under the rule and government of a right Spirit, qualifies us, and makes us capable of performing every Christian duty ; *We shall love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourselves ;* which is the sum of all godliness, and the true character of Christianity.

THE END.

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